THE INTEREST OF THE Church of England. IN A LETTER FROM A COUNTRY SCHOLAR TO A City Divine.

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The Preface.

Reverend Sir,

I Have now (according to the Proverb) made a vertue of necessity; and the little Paper I put into your hands for a perusal, is become the body of a Letter: I had thought to have sent it abroad, as poor and mean as it was, without any Patron, trusting to its own intrinsick value, never suspecting it would have any where been stopt, however it might not have met with any great approbation. But, Sir, I see my error, and have been taught the wisdom of Dedicatory Epistles, and seeking Patronage from worthy Persons; though sometime I might think it was not far removed from customary folly; yet now I see the best way to be regarded, to be enquired after, and taken notice of, is to set out with such as are well known, whose very presence gains respect and acceptance to those that can claim any share or interest in them. And though your name, and consequently your worth, be concealed, yet let the world know this is no pretended Epistle, to put a good face upon a piece in Print, but 'tis a grateful acknowledgment to a real Person (such an one as hath been modestly spoken of) of his candour in perusing and approving this poor and despicable piece. And truly I am glad of so fair an occasion to own and testifie that in publick, which before was but my own

private ſatisfaction. Your good liking and judgment hath gone ſo far with me, that (ſeting aſide the great conſideration of ſerving God and my Countrey) it hath been the only inducement for putting out once again into the wide world, when contrary winds have hitherto kept back the little Pinnace from taking her intended Voyage. I am confirmed much more every day, in the goodneſs and uſefulneſs of the deſign, and ſee no manner of ground to deſiſt, but rather to proceed and pray for the ſucceſs. The Letter which is reflected on toward the concluſion, and which was ſo tart and ſarcaſticat againſt our Clergy, *hath now a* ſecond *ſent abroad after it; and many Heads and Hands are buſie among us, about things that tends to no great good and benefit: I cannot but put my* Pen *to* Paper, *and, while too too many are pecking at the Temple, and hope by little and little to make it moulder away, caſt a few mites into the treaſury towards its maintenance and reſtauration. All that I have found out hitherto, or can frame in my mind as an objection againſt this kind of writing, is this, That this is to preſcribe and ſet Rules unto our* Clergy, *and ſo conſequently reflects upon their Learning and Religion. But ſure none will ever ſay ſo ſeriouſly, that conſider with what modeſty and ſubmiſſion the whole is written; and if it could have been, I would it had been much more ſo: As for preſcribing to any party, they that publiſh new matters, yea, any thing new, muſt needs fall under that cenſure, though they be never ſo far from deſerving it; for how otherwiſe ought can be propounded in* Print *of that nature, I confeſs my ſelf to be a perfect ſtranger to it: but I judge it is moſt notorious, that to propound and to preſcribe imperiouſly, are vaſt different from each other. Every ſort of Profeſſors, labour to promote their own*

parties

parties Profession what they can; as Philosophers, Physitians, and the like (particularly not long since a London *Physitian wrote to this purpose, and entituled his Book,* Medela Medicinæ;) *and though they strike seemingly at Persons, yet men of sense and worthy Persons, will think they aim only at things, and bestow their pains only to augment their several sorts of Profession; and indeed so the World interprets it; and their words are taken candidly and well accepted. The Title, I confess, may seem absurd, and not at all to the Treatise (of which by right it should have been a short Epitomy) which treats but of one party in the Church, and yet bears the name of the whole. But things most excellent and noble, may not absurdly be so called; and by the courtesie of most waies of speaking, the better part may and doth commonly go for it. But further, I have purposed with my self* (σὺν ἐῶ) *if this find any good acceptance, to treat in another piece of,* The Interest of the People in diligent hearing of the Word, and attending on the Ministry, *and then it will be perfectly and compleatly the whole* Interest of the Church of *England. But with this I begin, just as Painters, who being to draw a lively Picture, they presently describe the Eye, as a part which hath a natural aptness to regulate the whole draught of the Body. 'Tis the Ministers are the Stars in our Firmament, the Luminaries of our Land, and the Eyes of our Church: I think no man among us but will pray for their Light and good Conduct; for my part I have tried and offered to do somewhat more toward it; yet I do not presume to usurp a Dictatorship, and prescribe to that sacred Order, which were indeed an intollerable piece of arrogance and folly. I should wonder at my own Pen, if it should let drop a Letter to that purpose, as though it would prescribe to that*

Clergy

Clergy, which hath been long since the wonder of the World; Stupor mundi clerus Britannicus. What Works hath the World seen (I could almost say) like to those of our English Divines? How have they been the dread and terror, the maul and scourge of those very Enemies, who have made it their greatest business to debase and cry them down? I am perswaded no Divines, of any age or Kingdom whatsoever, have written more learnedly, solidly, and serviceably, to Christs Church on Earth: So that when there is occasion for Controversie and Polemick Divinity, a man may well say as David did concerning Goliah's Sword, Give me that, for there is none like it; so there are none like the English Divines, give me them. And as for Preaching, I have not learned that any pretend to compare with them; for to say no more, if it were possible in this part, they have even out-done themselves in the other. But here I would keep, and here I must stop, as it is high time; for I send you these lines but for a Preface, to what you once saw, and what now ensues upon them: If hereby the matter discussed may gain any acceptance, and meet with the least success; if I may be thought but to mean well in this work (who do protest I never meant any other than Glory to God, Honour to our Clergy, and Happiness to our Kingdom; and I hope this is well meaning) my desires rise no higher, and I shall be abundantly satisfied.

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THE INTEREST OF THE CHURCH of ENGLAND, &c.

THat the Bleſſing of Mankind throughout the whole World, in every Kingdom, Nation, Tribe or Family, conſiſts in the Favour or Benignity of the great God towards them; and that all Mercy proceeds originally from him; and that he is merciful, benign or favourable to thoſe that are careful to honour and ſerve him, are Principles engraven by God himſelf upon the Souls of men, are indelible Characters connatural to mens Spirits, and can never be raced out while they themſelves ſhall keep their immortal beings, and abide to be his Creatures. And hence it hath been alwaies ſeen, that thoſe Nations that know not God, that have not had his Mind and Will revealed to them, how they ſhould worſhip and ſerve him, yet notwithſtanding they have ſtumbled upon this way of making Prieſts to themſelves, and maintaining a particular Order of men among them, whoſe Place and Office it ſhould be to Sacrifice to their Deities,

to instruct and direct the People, and to act such parts, as they thought would ever be most acceptable to God and profitable to man [and it will be wonderful to them that read ancient and modern History, if they make remarks of this nature, to see how universally the Heathens of old, and those of the last and present Ages, have taken the same way, and erected almost the same sort of *Priesthood*] And of these separate ranks of Persons, who were to Minister in their religious Services, they have ever had an high esteem and veneration, accounting (as the truth indeed is) that the Glory of their Kingdoms, the safety of their State, and the welfare of their own private Concerns, depended much upon them; and they alwaies thought, that according to their Priests deserts, and the acceptance they found with their Gods, so it should undoubtedly fare with them, for better or for worse. Now I dare challenge the Christian World, which knows the truth, whether these poor Heathens are not in the right, and the case do not truly stand as they have taken it; that the Happiness, the Peace, the Glory of a People (or if there be any other word to express universal good by) doth not depend upon the Priests, *i.e.* those that Minister in holy things, those whom we know by the Gospel to be God's Ambassadors to Men, Teachers sent from God, the *Ministers* of the Church (or in a word, that for some Ages hath gone for current) the *Clergy*. Christians cannot be so void of understanding, as not to know that these men (I dare not say have the greatest influence upon God, but) are the greatest causes in a Land either of Good or Evil: As they stand towards God, so

it

become a Bleſſing, for which things ſake our God ſhall bleſs us, and they ſhall be happy inſtruments of the ſame? What can it be? Why, certainly 'tis to Preach well, and live well; to live as becomes the Goſpel they Preach, and to Preach the Goſpel as thoſe ſent of God to teach and ſave the World thereby: Theſe are the two great Points belonging to Miniſters, and which are inſeparable from them, as they would in a great Meaſure be accounted ſuch of God or Man; inſomuch that it hath been judged hard to determine which is the greateſt of the two, and moſt neceſſary for that Office and Qualification. I do not now intend to reflect on any in either of theſe Qualifications; they have been ſufficiently loaded with Calumny and Reproach, and if inſtead thereof the World would lighten their Burthen, and allure and perſwade them according to our purpoſe, it would be more happy on all Sides, a better expedient then poſſibly hath ever yet been thought of. If any thing here do ſound too Harſh, and cauſe Smart and Pain, it argues the corruption of the part, and muſt not be imputed to the means of Cure by gentle and healing Medicines. Some have heretofore written, *The grounds and occaſions of the contempt of the Clergy and Religion* in a more keen and tart Dialect, and yet well accepted: Ignorance and Poverty were then baited as the two horrid Monſters that have produced ſo great Miſchief; I gain-ſay it not, but leave them to ſuffer as they deſerve, only this I think, that an hearty and holy endeavour might greatly amend what is amiſs, and if a care to Preach and live well were univerſally taken up, it might give wonderful content to God and Man:

This Preaching and Practice, ſay I, are the two things that render Miniſters amiable, and make them a bleſſing; and that Miniſter that makes his Life a Comment upon his Sermons, doth open Chriſtianity the moſt profitably, and leaves the greateſt impreſſion upon the Mind and Conſcience of the People: Theſe living Examples captivate the Hearers, and hold them ſo long that at laſt the Sermon proves moſt ſucceſsful; So it hath been ſaid, *Viva prædicatorum eſt vocaliſſima*; *The Pious life of Miniſters is the loudeſt Preaching.* Such is the neceſſity and priviledge of the Preachers Chriſtian Life; but if he be one that doth not Practice what he himſelf doth or ſhould Teach, it were undoubtly the better of the two, that he live ill and Preach well then on the Contrary: * for the People abſolutly in a Moral ſenſe depend upon his Preaching, but not ſo upon his courſe of Living; this ſerves himſelf and may be ſerviceable to others, but for a Miniſter to Preach, is in the order God hath ſet in the World abſolutly neceſſary to all; without this they will fall into diſgrace and the People into Perdition.

* *Si bene vexerimus noſtrum, ſi bene dixerimus veſtrum.*

Tis this therefore above all that I propoſe to their moſt ſerious Conſideration, that they may diſcharge it rightly, and ſtrive to excel therein: And Preaching is without controverſie the choiceſt plant in the Clergies Garden, and the beſt Piece of Armour they can make uſe of; Not but that a Miniſter hath many other parts to Act, but this is his greateſt Duty, and if it be well performed it doth of all others become his Dignity and Glory; where he ſlays one ſin another way, Preaching hath ſlain it Thouſands, and Ten thouſands; where once any other means have

diſpoſeſt

diſpoſeſt Satan of his ſtrong holds, this *great Ordinance* hath done it a thouſand times more ſpeedily and effectually. It hath been a wonder to me, and ſure it muſt be ſo to every one that is the leaſt acquainted with *Goſpel Divinity*, how Preaching ſhould ever have been undervalued, as it hath ſometimes been, by thoſe that are deputed in a manner only to it; as though ought beſides it were ſo likely to ſave the World, to glorifie God, and beget Peace in Kingdoms and Nations. We will ſpare our ſelves and Readers the toil of *Concordance Collections*: But did not *John* the Baptiſt prevail above all before him, by Preaching of Repentance, and by Preaching up the Kingdom of Chriſt? Did not our Lord Chriſt come to Preach the Goſpel, and the Son of God himſelf go about Preaching the Kingdom of Heaven? Wonderful is that expreſſion of his (not only full to our purpoſe, but even to aſtoniſhment alſo) where he told ſome People that would have kept him to themſelves, and enjoyed his Miniſtry and Miracles alone; *Chriſt ſaid unto them, I muſt preach the Kingdom of God to other Cities alſo, for therefore am I ſent.* Luke 4.43.

What! *Muſt* Chriſt Preach? Did God the Father ſend him for this end? Then we may be ſure this is of greater moment, a concern of higher account with God, and ſerviceableneſs to man, then we are able to underſtand. What did Chriſt's Apoſtles and Diſciples in a manner, but Preach unto the Jews, and afterwards unto the Gentiles? And indeed Chriſt made this the better part, and the very body of their Commiſſion. And with what ſucceſs did they diſcharge this great Office, when they did diligently Mark 16. 15.

Acts 2. particularly ver. 37. 41.

attend unto it? Why, *Peter* at one Sermon converted ſome thouſands; ſo that with one conſent they threw down their Arms, capitulated, and ſought forgiveneſs of God, and gladly received his terms of mercy; whereby we have a notable proof. How mighty theſe Weapons of Spiritual Warfare are, if they are in the hands of Chriſt's able Miniſters and Soldiers? What was the great means of gathering the Goſpel Characters but Preaching? And by what means were they encreaſed but by the ſame Preaching? Miracles themſelves, even when they were in their ſtrength and vigour, in the Apoſtles daies, do not ſeem to have wrought half ſo much upon the hearts of men, as did their Sermons. *Miracles* (as one well ſaith) *were means to bring many to the outward Court of the Temple of God, and the door of Chriſt's Church; but it was the Key of Knowledge of the Divine Myſteries themſelves, that unlock'd the Church doors, and opened an entrance to them into the Houſe of God.* Sometimes they were like *John* the Baptiſt, who prepared the way for the Lord; and ſometimes they were Seals to the Sermons: God himſelf, the great *Maſter* of the Aſſemblies, faſtning thereby what his Servants had ſet together. If we come down a little lower, and take the Church in its youth, when it was in its ſplendour, and ſpread forth its Branches moſt fair and fruitful: what did then water it, maintain it and multiply it, but the ſame Preaching ſtill? In the daies of the Chriſtian Emperours, when the populous Cities of *Antioch*, *Alexandria*, *Conſtantinople*, *Rome*, and ſuch like, had received the Laws of Chriſt into them, and were made free; and the Churches at that time were thronged

thronged with ſuch ſwarms of Hearers, that the Fathers have many elegant Metaphors on that account, comparing it to the vaſt Sea, the ſtupendious Theatres, &c. (and I remember the golden mouth'd Divine, takes occaſion ſomewhere largely to anſwer the objection of the nice and tender hearers, ariſing hence, that they could not bear to be thronged and ſweltred ſo long together, among ſuch multitudes; and a man might almoſt ſay, *Myriads* of People.) What courſe then did *Baſill*, *Chryſoſtome*, *Ambroſe*, *Auguſtine*, and ſuch great Divines, take to ſupport ſuch mighty Buildings? What did they to keep alive ſo many thouſands, to ſecure them from *Schiſm*, *Hereſie*, and Deſtruction? Why, the ſame altogether that the Wiſdom of God ſaw neceſſary from the firſt: the ſame that the great Apoſtle St. *Paul* did, whoſe induſtry in Preaching may juſtly be admired, but will hardly ever be imitated.

And truly ſuch is the Ordinance of Preaching, ſo great is the power of it, ſo greatly doth Gods Honour, and Mens Happineſs, and the Peace of Kingdoms depend upon it, that there ſeems to me much reſemblance between the dependance of the *Iſraelites*, upon *Moſes* in the Hill, when they fought with *Amalek*, and of Chriſtians upon their *Miniſters* in the Pulpits; when *Moſes* held up his Hands then *Iſrael* prevailed, but when he let them down then *Amalek* prevailed: So when *Miniſters* lift up holy Hands to God in Prayer, and lift up their Voice, teaching the People their Tranſgreſſions and Sins, and inſtructing them in the waies of Righteouſneſs; then Sin is diſcomfited, and Sorrow and Mourning fly away; but otherwiſe Iniquity lifts up its hands, it *Exod.* 17.

destroys all before it, and Misery and Destruction fall in with it, and fill all places with Calamity. Or methinks as it was, when *David* went out between
1 *Sam.* 17. the two Armies of the *Israelites* and *Philistins*, and slew their mighty Champion the great *Goliah*; so 'tis when the *Minister* stands up before the People, and addresses himself to fight for them against Satan that roaring Lion: great is the expectation on all sides, and if he be expert in the word, and prevail over the *Arch Enemy*, that bids defiance to the Church of God, then the whole Congregation arises and shouts for joy, and every one is then able to grapple with the Lusts and Sins that have set themselves in battel array against them. What shall we think would not be practicable, how glorious would the success be throughout the World, if this Preaching were but rightly applied? It hath done wonders in the World since Christs coming into it, since he set it on foot therein, it hath beat down the strong holds of Satan, and by all the head that ever he could make against it, he hath not been able to keep his ground; but by Preaching the *Gentiles* are become a perfect conquest, and Christ reigns over them most gloriously, with a Scepter of Peace and Righteousness. It hath taken away the Lions Rage, the Serpents Poyson, the Tygers Fierceness, and the Woolfs Cruelty; and now the Lion and Lamb lie down together; and a Child may safely play with *Asps* and *Vipers*. * The rage and fury wherewith

* This hath been fully proved by *Orosius*, in his History of the World, wherein he shews that since Christ's time there hath been greater Peace on Earth, greater Tranquility by far, than ever the Kingdoms of the World enjoyed before; though the old Heathens ever accused the Christians as the only incendiaries, and Causes of all publick Calamities.

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the Nations of old did foam, and dash themselves in pieces one against another, is greatly ceased: the prodigious Lusts, whereby the Sons of men made themselves more vile than Brutes, are greatly abated; or if it be not so, but this state returns again, 'tis the neglect of *Preaching* that hath succeeded Satans Plot, of recovering his old possession, and given him an opportunity of setting himself again, when once he was entirely vanquisht and put to flight. Were but this revived, what a verdure would there be upon the face of the Church, what a Spring and Harvest, full of all manner of Fruits, both pleasant and profitable? If Sin should prove luxuriant, this would lop the superfluous Boughs; if Vertue should wither, this would distill like Drops of Rain, and soon revive it. It would be a Sun to cherish us, a Pillar to support us, a Treasure to enrich us, an Ornament about our Necks, and a Crown of Glory upon our Heads. Well may every Man's Eye be upon the *Minister*, and the People express this every where as their sense, that it is in their hands to with-hold or give them happiness. No wonder if the Clergy go under good report and bad report, if they be the talk of all, when every one doth truly look upon these things as we have represented them. And are the parties most concerned all this while, supine and negligent? I must again protest as before, that this is not written to charge them so, but to excite and quicken them. They are Wise, they are able to Judge, they know how their own Eternal Interest lies at stake, and *Wo be unto them if they Preach not the Gospel:* and truly they have such a weighty Office to discharge, that they

they little need the Clamours and Curses of any, but infinitely rather their help and prayers, and pity (only as we have more than once remarked, the Peoples self-interest is also so exceeding great, that they will never hold their Peace, if there be this great occasion.) It is an exceeding hazard whether they that preach to others do not themselves last at prove *Cast-waies*. St. *Paul*, who of all men had lest need, dreaded it himself; the thoughts and danger of it were so terrible and dreadful to him, that he was wonderfully careful, and took a strange course to prevent it. And S. *Chrysostome*, that excellent and painful Preacher, hath this passage, *I speak*, saith he, *no other than what I think, and am verily perswaded of; I do not think that among Ministers there are many that shall be saved, but that many more shall eternally miscarry.* For as he elsewhere protested solemnly to his hearers, that, *he doubted whether one of a thousand would go to Heaven*, they did so generally transgress God's Commandments: *For*, saith he, *what wickedness is to be seen in Youth? What Vanity even among Old People? The Parent takes little or no care for his Childs Education; the Children again regard not the hoary Head, nor have any regard to the Aged to make them their presidents, and imitate them in what is praiseworthy.* So he gives good reason for this hard saying of his concerning the Ministers; for how do most discharge their Stewardship? Τίς ἡμῶν ἐπιδείκνυται τοσαύτην προντίδα περὶ τὰ ποίμνια, &c. *Which of us*, saith he, *is half so solicitous for the Flock of Christ, as* Jacob *was for the Flock of* Laban? *Whom hath the Drought consumed by Day, the Frost by Night; and their Sleep departed from their Eyes?* But to my purpose

1 Cor. 9. 26, 27.

Homil. 3. in Act. Apost.

Homil. 24. ut supra.

pose, Who minds this one thing, to preach the Gospel as those that are sent of Christ, to Preach it in Power and Demonstration of the Spirit of God? How many, contrary to the great Apostle *Paul*, Preach'd it in the enticing words of man's Wisdom, to gain Applause to themselves, and not Salvation to Men or Glory to God?

And truly, though that pompous way of stuffing Sermons with Greek and Latin Sentences, hath by our Church been wisely casher'd and cast quite out of late years (which was really much worse than that jingling way, so nauseous to sober Divines, and which one thus excellently delineats to procure it just hatred and derision: *I blush*, saith he, *to fall into the least touch of that kind, yet at once to shew and reprove that childish folly: It is a vein of vain Preaching, tickling mens Ears like a tinckling Cymbal, feeding them* ἡδύσμασι καὶ οὐκ ἐδέσμασι; A way no more likely to save men's Souls, than the shining Jewel to satisfie the Dung-hill Cock in the Fable; tho Satan taught poor Creatures sometimes to be ambitious of such Sermons: just as I have heard a *Rustick* say [*he loved* (or *it did him good*, I am sure I speak his sense) *to hear his young Master now and then read him a Chapter in the Greek Testament*] That, I say, hath been of late every where exploded; but would to God also, that the smooth way of Preaching were laid down, which looks just like a Speech or Declamation, spoken by a puny Scholar: Not that I reflect, by any means, upon the Learned Divines of this present Age, who are persons of deep and profound Judgment, as well as lofty and Eloquent in their Speech, and know how to deliver themselves

S. Ward's, Coal from the Altar; on *Rev.* 3. 19.

in *University* or *City Assemblies*, becoming the Presence and Auditory: But while the Country Teachers think to imitate them, they speak above their hearers reach, and sadly fall below their own intentions, if they be honest and becoming the Ministry. For as great and deep Rivers (which run and glide along so smoothly, that their motion is scarce discerned) were made for great *Jewels*, which at certain times they plentifully enrich, when they swell and overflow them; but little Streams, Brooks and Rivulets, are branched up and down among the Pasture Fields, which by their divisions make them fruitful, or serve to water the Herds and Flocks that feed within them: So is it with the great and truly Eloquent Divines, their Floods like *Jordan*, happily serve to water mighty Plains, when they overflow their Banks; but for Country Churches to have such swelling Words and Eloquent Speeches made unto them, would be as dangerous as for Flocks and Herds to *water* at deep Rivers: it were never so designed, for that were to drown them and not to give them Drink. But God hath provided little Streams for these; and the Ministers should imitate his works, and plainly condescend to *their* Hearers Natural Capacities, and so branch out their Discourses, that they may give them something to hold by, some ground to stand upon, and opportunity to profit themselves by, fastning what they say in their memories. But how oft is it seen, that when such as these strive to shew their skill in Rhetorick, where once they gain their end, their Discourses are spoiled twice over (to speak very charitably) if not for Rhetorick and Reason, yet most certainly for Religion? It is a notable

table Relation, which I have read in a learned Author to this purpose: " I put a Treatise, saith he, " newly come out, into the hands of a young man for " his perusal, which I knew was only full of empty " words; but there was not wanting in it, what might " invite such as had no solid Judgment; for the Au- " thor was a Person of great note and esteem; the " impression was passing fair and elegant, enough to " dazzle the Eyes, and hold them looking on; the " sentences and expressions did flow most sweetly, and " were set off with the greatest Grace; the Preface " made such a shew of Modesty, that one might judge " there were greater matter in such a piece; and who " could expect any less, when there was such a fair " and praising Face set upon it: besides, other more " such baits and allurements, as might make it " wonderfully taking, to a sprightly airy Reader. " Now you shall know how well my plot succeeded: " When three or four daies were hardly over, our " Youth, to whom the Book was recommended, " comes to me, with a wild Countenance and Ge- " sture, and scarce knowing how to behave himself " for very joy; then I conjecturing, by his carriage, " how the case stood; Well, said I, Did you not " find it to be a rare Piece? Presently he catches my " words, and falls to commending it out of measure: " And, I shall never, saith he, find out words, to " set forth the Author, according to his worth: No " truly, I replied, you must needs be in the right, " for I hear so much of him, and his Name and Cha- " racter is every where such as you give him: But I " pray now do not ingross all this Treasure, and en- " vy us the happiness of sharing with you; But see-

Gaussenus de ratione concionandi.

" ing my leiſure will not ſerve me to peruſe it, tell
" me ſomewhat particularly of what you find ſo ad-
" mirable in the Book? This queſtion ſtruck my
" Youngſter dumb; he rubs up his Memory, he chafes
" and frets, but all the while I cannot hear one
" Word or Syllable coming from him; at length he
" falls to complaining of the badneſs of his Memory,
" and to accuſe himſelf of being very forgetful;
" when I in the mean time could not but laugh in
" my Sleeve, knowing well that the Youth's Me-
" mory was in no fault, but the Authors empty
" Words and fruitleſs way of Writing. Truly juſt
thus ſtands the caſe before us; too too many trifle after this ſort in the great things of God, and while they ſtrive to ſpeak Floridly and with Affectation, they Preach fruitleſs, and by their empty Speeches they leave no ſound impreſſion upon the Hearts of their Hearers: Their Memories, many times, can retain nothing, through the miſerable default of thoſe that teach them, and not for want of induſtry in thoſe poor Creatures that hearken and attend unto them. I my ſelf ſpeak not now without Book, but it is what I have once and again experienced; when I have ſet my ſelf to hear moſt carefully, and tried to carry away what I could, I have ſcarce been able, out of the Church, to recollect one Paſſage after ſuch a Preacher; when from a mean Preacher, and no methodical one neither, I have been able, at other times, to call back again a great part of what hath been delivered. And what ſervice are ſuch Sermons of, which are alwaies upon the wing, and fly away as faſt as they are heard? What good comes by ſuch *verbal* Preachers, who

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are, *Vox & præterea nihil?* Who make Sermons to be heard, but neither to be remembred nor practiced? Sermons, which for their fine ſound may be had in admiration, but leave the Heart, as far from the love of Piety, and the likely way to attain to Happineſs, as ever they found it? This is to give the People Stones inſtead of Bread, and they will Starve and Periſh or ere they can get Food and Nouriſhment of them: At the beſt, this is to give them Rhetorick for Religion, and the vain Florid Words of Art and Eloquence, for the *Word of God*, the Word of Life. Such ſend away their Hearers as empty as they came, only it may be ſome are fill'd with wind and vanity, which makes their caſe yet more dangerous than the others, that are lean and hungry and half ſtarved. For there is this two-fold Evil theſe *A-la-mode* Preachers do commit, whoſe conſequences are moſt pernicious and deadly. If they meet with a plain Country Auditory, they neither will pleaſe them, nor (which is more conſiderable by far) profit them at all; their Hearers know not where to have them, and when they go away, the greater part of them may well ſay, *They know not wherefore they were come together*: But if they meet with ſuch as are humoured with this way of Preaching, there the miſchief they do is inconceiveable, for they maintain Sin and boulſter it up, in thoſe that will not allow themſelves any other means to be convinced and ſaved. The Gallants of the Age can well endure to hear ſuch fine Diſcourſes, which pleaſe their Palates, and it may be are delivered as modiſhly, with as neat and complemental an Air, as ever they heard out of the Churches. * So one reports

* Reflections on the Eloquence of the times, *&c.* p. 117. a French piece tranſlated and Printed at *Oxford*, 1672.

reports it, that going to hear a Sermon one day in Lent, at a great Church, the Preachea Diſcourſed concerning Sufferings and Afflictions, with a gay and affected Air, while the Ladies from time to time lifted up their Eyes to Heaven and ſaid, *This is fine! He is an admirable Preacher!* While I was very much troubled, ſaith he, to hear one ſpeak ſo pleaſantly on a ſubject which ſhould have been delivered with terror; and to deſign to be taking, when he ought to have work'd on his Audience a real Sorrow and unfeigned Contaition. Theſe are they that ſew Pillows to their Arm-holes that come to hear them; whom the Scripture brands for ſuch deceivers, and pronounces dreadful Threats and Woes againſt them. Alas! This is but like as if a Shepherd ſhould Pipe merrily to his Flock, and never take care to feed, or fold, or keep them ſafe. Nay, I dare boldly ſay, theſe are Satans beſt *Syrenes*, his moſt proſperous *Decoyes*, who ſing a *Requiem* to Sinners, and rock them faſt aſleep till they are a prey to that devouring Lion. Poor Creatures! You ſhall hear them have theſe words continually in their Mouths, *A fine Preacher*, but for the matter of his Sermon, they will not (perhaps they cannot) tell you one word thereof. Truly ſuch had as good have took their eaſe altogether, and ſlept away the time; for all ſuch Teaching and Hearing is but like a golden Dream, after which when they awake, they will find themſelves poor and miſerable. *Others* there are more ſolid Preachers, and likely to ſucceed, who Preach in a profitable way out of the *Word*; but theſe ſpoil all by Preaching their own Paſſions and Intereſt; for this it may be takes up a third part of their time, in a moderate computation, while

while the necessary points of Religion must lie neglected, or at least only make way to usher in their Heats and Passions, and to grace and countenance the Discourse all the while: Such sometimes lash and gird the Parties they design so severely, that the Assembly cannot endure such merciless dealing and unmeasurable cruelty. Nay, sometimes when they have cut and girded them so excessively, under colour of discharging their duty truly, they cannot but bewray their self interest, which foments such rage and fury, and they shew that they say all this for Destruction and not for Edification; for they are ready to utter their minds in *Baalams* words to his poor Ass, that if they had a Sword in their Hands they would thrust them through, though all the while the Prophet was more blind then the Ass, as 'tis usual with those hot Spirits, when they enveigh at this extravagant rate against any that are their Eye-sores. But put the case the best that may be for such Preachers, *The Wrath of Man doth not work the Righteousness of God*; and such sarcastical Sermons are not like to save men: They may open some Mens Mouths against themselves, as well as against those they have exposed, but will scarce open any man's Heart to receive the sacred Graces of God's Holy Spirit: They may distemper their Hearers and put them into an Agony, but hardly Cherish and Compose, and Strengthen the Vitals of Christianity in them; and I am perswaded if any love such Pulpit-railery, yet it lessens the due respect and reverence they have for the Preacher: for surely none can think that place was made for such purposes, or that all the Parish came together on God's day, to hear such an invective Speech a- *Jam.* 1. 20.

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gainſt an Opinion or Party; methinks they themſelves ſhould fear leſt their fiery Zeal ſhould miſguide them, and they ſhould be ſometimes as much beſide their Text, as they are off from the Spirit of Chriſtianity. For what if Men will not receive Chriſt, which is the higheſt point they can pretend to countenance their Paſſions, yet are they not therefore to call for Fire from Heaven upon them; they are not to ſcatter Fire-brands and Death, unleſs the poor Apoſtles in their ſinful Pattern, ſhall be their Pattern, rather than their meek and compaſſionate Saviour, who ſharply reproved them. Such as theſe two ſorts of Preachers, may cauſe much Table-talk, but what they Miniſter for Mens Cloſet Devotions, I confeſs I cannot ſee, only this I know, they ſpoil Peoples expectations; they put them to a loſs of time and attendance, and by doing nothing to the purpoſe they doe exceeding much hurt. To raiſe Deteſtation in the Hearers, in the time of Speaking, and a Tumult after Sermon? how unlikely is this to have the Miniſtry ſucceeded with the Salvation of Mens Souls? To go away with matter to talk of *pro* and *con*, how prejudicial is this to the ſanctifying of the Sabbath, and attaining the ends of its Inſtitution? When ſuch things are occaſioned by Preaching, certainly there is cauſe and great cauſe to complain of ſuch a Preacher. 'Tis to Preach ſo that a man may ſee the Hearers Hearts are engaged, 'tis to ſee them ſit quietly being never excited by the Diſcourſe, to ſhew any Vanity; 'tis to ſee them riſe after Sermon ſilently and penſively without a word; and when every one betakes him to his home, to meditate on the word which he found was indeed the Word of God; to

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lay up the Treaſures which had ſuch a Glory in them when they were ſet in order before him; to cleanſe himſelf of the Filth which he found upon himſelf; to cloath himſelf with the fine Linnen, which is the Righteouſneſs of the Saints; theſe are the things that commend a Preacher, theſe are the ways of God's Glory, and of Mens Peace and Happineſs: As for florid Speeches, and fooliſh Paſſions, they have diſhonoured God greatly, they have hid his word, and drawn a Veil over his revealed Will, and unto men they have been a grievous occaſion of Miſery and Deſtruction. But I will not run out any further in proteſting againſt theſe or other ſuch like abuſes in the Miniſtry. May this excite all Miniſters to do their beſt in the great concern of Preaching, and I ſhall not be concerned which way they take to manage their own buſineſs; they are able to judg and contrive for themſelves; only theſe two great abuſes I could not baulk, nor paſs them by without a cenſure, ſeeing they are the common talk, and every one crys ſhame upon them. As for the next I meddle not at all, nor preſcribe any rules or method how to model and diſcipline them. Indeed 'tis not this nor t'other, nor any other rule that will avail the leaſt in this matter; nothing but a deep and ſerious ſenſe in every one of them, that they are ſent from God to open blind Eyes, to break aſunder ſtony Hearts, to ſuppreſs Sin, to promote Holineſs, to give Light to the World, to open a way to its Peace and Happineſs, and to be the very props and pillars of it. Were but theſe things thought on, it would make them all to fear and tremble; for who is ſufficient for theſe things? And this Holy Jealouſie would ſtir them up to implore

help of the Almighty God, to seek the Spirit of Knowledg and of Power; and except this be done, there is nothing but trouble and darkness, confusion and misery to be look'd for, and at whose door this will be laid the World will Judg, and whether in a great measure they do not Judg aright, let him that shall offend in this sort cleer himself if he be able. It hath been the Glory of our Nation to be Famous in these last Centuries, for their curious Inventions; whereby they have advanced Learning, and by their notable Discoveries done Mankind the greatest service; and the World will ever acknowledg how they are beholding to us for some of the rarest Discoveries the Sun hath seen: And we have seen but Yesterday as it were, that happy invention of making Salt Water fresh (for which the Name of *Boyle* shall keep fresh in the minds and memory of Men, so long as they coast on Sea, and there is *Card* and *Compass.*) Shall these *Vertuoso's* get all the Praise, and shall no Worthies arise and revive something in Divinity? I know we are not to expect any additions, but improvements may be made of that which lies on our part to perform; we may amend what is amiss; we may recover out of our own decaies, and flourish after fading: And now I would that as we have got the way to make Salt Water fresh, to the benefit of our selves and the whole World, which is the Glory of our State: So the Ministry among us would retain their Saltness, would shew themselves to be the Salt of our Land, in our * Saviours sense, which would be the Glory both of Church and State. This is all

* *Matth.* 5. 13. Ye are the Salt of the Earth; but if the Salt have lost his Savour, wherewith shall it be Salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and troden under foot of men.

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the design of this Paper, to promote such a necessary piece of service. It was long since spoken by a great Scholar (saith my Author) *That such Preaching as is usual, is rather an hindrance to Salvation than a means of it.* God forbid it should be so; but it seems wise Men and learned have taken it so; and I would they and the whole World were now convinc'd it were otherwise; that the Mouths of Gain-sayers were stopt, and that our Ministers were such that all men might arise and call them blessed: This will be, especially if they Preach in the power of God's Spirit, if they meditate on these things, and give themselves wholly to them.

Grounds of contempt of the Clergy.

I am ashamed to * find it said concerning the *Publick Ministers* of our Church (and if truly said, 'tis enough to make our Hearts to bleed.) *She can no more whip People into her Church; and she perhaps may modestly suspect her Vertue and Ability to Preach them thither.* Sirs, where are your hopes if you are fal'n into this Disgrace, and have no will or power to help your selves out of it? Is Preaching at so low an ebb at this juncture of affairs, that when his Majesty hath *Declared a Liberty of Conscience*, the Church of England dares not presume to vye with her Competitors? I speak not this to stir up Spleen and Strife, and Hatred and Indignation: No, no, this hath been reflected more smartly than the other. It is time for Pulpit Wars to cease; I would only provoke the Clergy to Preaching and good Works. I have but one word to say, and I conclude; and that is God's terrible message to *Eli* concerning his Sons, who were Priests among his People *Israel*; and though it may seem to

* A Letter from a Country Gentleman to his Friends in the City, upon the matter of Penal Laws and the Tests.

Prophecy bad ſucceſs, yet I ſhall not therefore baulk it for a concluſion; it is God's Word, and there is hope and comfort in it, as well as fear and terror; it ſhall prove to us, but as we approve our ſelves to God; it is like the bitter Water of Jealouſie, which will be innocent or hurtful, only as we are that take it; if we are guilty, wo be unto us, much more if we will not be reformed; but otherwiſe it ſhall go well with us and our Land: I beſeech you read theſe Words and tremble you Sons of *Levi*, eſpecially to whom it was firſt ſpoken; *Now the Lord ſaith, them that honour me, I will honour, and they that deſpiſe me, ſhall be lightly eſteemed.*

1 *Sam.* 2. 30.

And thus Sir I have depoſed my Thoughts upon a Subject which hath ever been of the higheſt importance; but I think there needs no mentioning theſe circumſtances that render the preſent Diſcuſſing of it moſt ſeaſonable in our own Nation. What the Honourable *Boyle* reports concerning the Character Dr. *Willis* gave him of a certain *Specifick*, decryed by ſome, *'Tis the Nobleſt Medicine* (ſaith he) *we know*; the ſame I cannot but ſay over and over again of *Preaching*; *It is the nobleſt Medicine we know, next to the Written Word of God*; *it is the Treaſury of the Souls health, the* Panacæa *of all Spiritual Diſeaſes, and that Land is out of danger that hath this Divine Medicine duly adminiſtred unto it:* And truly I think Dr. *Heylyn* was much in the right, when ſpeaking of the wonderful increaſe and growth of *Proteſtantiſm* ("Which Reformation ſaith he, was of ſuch a ſpeedy "growth, that within the ſpace of Forty Years it was "not only received in all thoſe Countries that do now

Reconcile. of Specific Medicines to *Corpuſc. Philoſ.* p. 17.

in his Geography on *Germany*; in the beginning mihi. p. 402.

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" profeſs it, but had once alſo got ſome footing both " in *Spain* and *Italy*.) The ſecond Ground he aſſigns " next to tranſlating the Scripture into Vulgar Lan- " guages, every ones Mother Tongue, which eaſily " diſcovered the corruption of the Church of *Rome*, " both in Doctrinals and Form of Worſhip, is this of " Preaching; the diligent Preaching of their Miniſtry " (I ſtill ſpeak in his own words) both in Towns and " Villages for the expounding of the Scriptures, and " fitting them to the capacity of the meaneſt Audi- " tors, which gain'd exceedingly both on the Judg- " ment and Affection of the common People, the " courſe of Preaching having been formerly neglected " by the Pariſh Curate, and turn'd off wholly in a man- " ner to the begging Friars.

Hence 'tis that ſome have always been laborious induſtrious, and painful to a wonder, in carrying on this great and bleſſed work, who have imitated the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles, in ſpending themſelves and being ſpent, that ſo they might give Light unto their Land, in which God had ſet them up for the ſame purpoſe; who have made their *Pulpits* as it were their *Funeral Piles*, their Preaching hath ſpent and conſumed them, and they have fall'n *Martyrs* to the Proſperity and Salvation of their People: However this ſound to ſome, I am ſure it is no Paradox, nor ſtrange Problem to your ſelf; who ſet your ſelf and have made it your buſineſs in this way of Preaching to ſerve Chriſt and your Country, which your works of this nature do to me (and to the World I doubt not) abundantly teſtifye. But I fear, I ſhall offend by being too tedious, and therefore I had rather ſtop on a ſuddain with ſome abruptneſs than be guilty of cauſing

causing the least loathing by prolixity: And indeed I have not studied so much to write in order and *decorum*, as to serve my great design, and so I am not without good hope that I shall find pardon and be excused for such faults as may easily be charged upon me.

I am

Sir

Your most, &c.